

INGRID WIEGAND

This past weekend about 90 curators, artists and dealers who are involved with video as a medium for art converged on the Everson Museum in Syracuse to talk, show, look and make contacts. For a medium in which art world politics took over faster than the Godfather moving into a new numbers racket, it was a beautiful conference, with that electric quality that happens when people are open and excited about common possibilities. I covered the conference as a videotape artist.

Part of the reason was the Everson Museum, which has been just about the video museum of the east ever since **James Harithas** became its director. "What interests me about video," he said, "is not only that it provides a means for art to reach a wider audience, but also that it is a means for people who need to express themselves creatively . . . The center is the visual artist, but the extension is the museum. Video is a means of linking groups like artists, blacks and museum people, all of whom don't "fit" into the society. Museums must take a responsible position with respect to the medium. It is the only means for total community interaction with an art museum, and the future of the museum will depend on its use."

The conference was basically intended to explore the possibilities for using and showing video in the museum, but the emphasis was definitely on the possibilities for making museums "head-ends" (input points) in local cable networks. In this the conference reflected the concerns of its organizer, **David Ross**, whom Harithas had made one of the first American video curators. Ross is moving to the Long Beach Museum in California as Curator of Programming and Television, with a mandate to

put together and run a cable TV station at the museum.

One big concern of the museum people was the large investment in purchase and rental of video equipment; another was how to use and show video in the museum. **Lucy Kostelanetz** (the Visual Arts Program Director for NYSCA who started and

funded the conference together with the Rockefeller Foundation) said, "Right now, the funds that museums need for video would have to come out of funds that museums need just to stay open. One of the

problems that really have to be solved is the linking of programs and equipment. That is, what kind of equipment does a museum need to fulfill the goals of a given program? At this point, the museums are still developing programs. The potential of video in the art museum isn't really clear yet. That's what this conference is about."

This was underlined by **Gila Gevirtz** of the Public Education Department of the Met. "We've commissioned a couple of tapes by Peter Campus that were shown in conjunction with exhibitions. But they really weren't successful, even though they were really good tapes, well made and beautifully composed. I think we have to find out why they didn't work before we go farther in our own use of videotape."

Rebecca Lawrence at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts has produced TV programs with WGBH, the local NET station, for years. "Working with WGBH has been great, but still limiting in terms of what could be done. So at this point, I'm preparing proposals to purchase enough equipment so we can produce more of our own things. At the same time we're hoping to get permanent gallery space for showing videotapes. We are also exploring the possibilities of cable TV for the museum, in terms of community links to the museum and programs related to exhibitions."

WGBH itself was there in the persons of **Fred Barzyk**, **Dorothy Chiesa** and **Olivia Tappan** with an important announcement for videotape artists. Chiesa said: "We have a large grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to create high-risk, low-cost program formats as demonstrations of video art. As of now we are accepting written proposals (only—no calls) from artists for this workshop. The proposal must describe the work in detail and give the equipment, time and other facilities needed to create it." Proposals should be sent to Workshop, WGBH, 125 Western Avenue, Boston, Mass,

02134. Remember, you read it here first!

Carlota Schoolman, who is in charge of scheduling events at the Kitchen, announced that there would be two weeks of video at the end of June, from the 15th to the 30th. "Since I've come to the Kitchen, I've been trying to be selective and show mostly work that hasn't been seen at the Kitchen before. For example, Bob Whittman will do some performances this month. He hasn't shown much recently and I'm really pleased to be able to help and see his show happen. The Kitchen is also going to keep on showing a lot of video, as well as performance works."

Howard Wise was there representing his video distribution outfit, Electronic Arts Intermix, as was the Manager, **Maxi Cohen**. "I founded EAI," he said, "because I wanted to serve more artists than I could in a gallery situation, and to increase the impact of the video artist's work. We will distribute our tapes on both purchase and leasing bases, but only to institutions. The kind of work we will handle will not be in any one direction. I'm interested in creating a broad spectrum of the most interesting tapes available."

Marty and Tannah Dunn are Canadian video artists and Marty Dunn is coordinator of Trinity Square Video Programs in Toronto and consultant to **VIDEOSCAPE**—a video program at the Art Gallery of Ontario. He said, "How does the archetypal starving artist get next to literally thousands of dollars in artistic tools? He hustles his ass off. To free the artist from energy-draining hardware hunts, I hope to see museums and galleries invite artists to make use of their facilities for developing and exploring video as an art form."

Videoscape plans to exhibit a complete range of Canadian work with a sampling of American material." Application forms can be obtained from Videoscape, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

Beryl Korot, who publishes **Radical Software** with **Ira Schneider**, assured me that the magazine was still alive and well. "We've just had publisher problems that I hope we'll solve when we get a new publisher in

the fall. Of course it also depends on the funding situation: we hope to operate with paid contributions . . . We're

still into volume two—the series that we've farmed out to different people, and there'll be two more issues like that. But we'll keep printing what happens. The emphasis will be on vital concerns like tape distribution."

On Friday, **Walter Wright** and **Ralph Hocking** brought the Paik/Abe synthesizer down from the Binghamton Experimental Television Center and Wright ran a demonstration/workshop on it. This included showing some of Wright's recent tapes, including one where he interfaced with four monitors so that the images jumped from

one monitor image to another on the screen. "What do I have in progress now? I guess you could say that getting the synthesizer around so people can look at it is my current piece." I asked Ralph Hocking, who founded the Center, why artists had such good feelings about Binghamton. "Well," he said, "You can come up and spend two or three days and even sleep there and do what you want to do. We don't have an in-house union." Artists who want to use the Center must apply in advance. They're booked solid to July.



photo B. Wiegand

Walter Wright moves his PAIK/Abe synthesizer into the Everson

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Last week I published half of my report on the Everson Museum video conference held in Syracuse the previous week. Although the conference dealt with video and the museum, it was important news for video artists because it embodied a lot of the problems and possibilities of getting work produced and distributed. But it was also a great opportunity to see some very large-scale video pieces that don't often get shown in NYC because of the fantastic equipment rental costs involved. So this week, I'll finish up the data cut from last week's column and get on to the art.

Access centers are the concern of **Lydia Silman**, Deputy TV Media Associate of NYSCA. "We're concerned with creative uses of the video medium—video as an art form—including special museum exhibitions. We take a broad view and invest in all phases of video... There are currently three public access centers funded by us in New York City: the Downtown Community TV Center, Survival Arts Media, and Global Village. We have also funded three facilities statewide where artists can have their tapes time-base corrected for free, although they must pay for two-inch tape and tape equipment if they use it. The three stations for TBC are NET's workshop on 46th Street in New York, the WCNY facility in Syracuse, and the WXXI facility in Rochester."

Jim Reinish, Associate for Visual Arts Projects at NYSCA, has other concerns. "What my department is interested in," he said, "falls into two broad categories. One is art documentation, which is really a new concern of the Council, and it includes such uses of video as taped interviews with artists and recording of exhibitions and other art events. The other area involves work with community groups. For example, we funded a media bus for the Videofreex to link the Kirkland Art Center in Clinton with the local cable station. The Center

is now producing programs which are shown on the local cable station, and we made that possible."

And in brief: **Suzanne Delahanty**, Director of the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, is planning a big video show next January. **Christopher Cook**, Director of the Addison Gallery of American Art, has been using the Museum's facilities to work with in- and out-patients from the mental hospital at Danvers. He is planning a production center, a video theater and a video library at Addison, all of which will be used both in the community and for exhibitions. **Bruce Kurtz**' critic and artist, is planning to set up an independent video facility for artists at Hartwick College in Oneonta and intends to put on a big video show. Now to the work!

The Everson Museum is a really good structure—designed by I.M. Pei from poured concrete, with concrete coffered ceilings and concrete flying stairs and balconies. It houses videotape comfortably. Four artists put on major works for this show. The entire top floor—a ring of four galleries around a central two-story court was filled with **Pete Campus**' participation pieces. I don't have space to describe all seven of them, but will give you an idea: Several used video projectors situated so that you saw yourself in various ways usually slightly larger than life; another piece used multiple cameras and monitors; another viewed the museum through several suspended moving mirrors.

On the main floor, from a balcony, **Nam Jun Paik** had created a "TV garden" using color monitors set for different color balances to saturate a 500-square-foot area. The monitors were interspersed with potted plants. On the monitor Paik's "Global Groove" tape—a collage of techniques, sound and images—flowered phosphorescently in the darkened court. "It's better not to have aesthetics in video," he said. "We must keep video open. It will also be necessary to keep

video open to performers—to dancers, theater people and musicians. This will become an important use of video in the next few years."

Ira Schneider's 22-monitor, 6-deck piece called "Manhattan is an Island" filled a gallery with down-, mid-, up-, under-, around-, and above-town images of Manhattan. The monitors were arranged so that the different perspectives of the

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island were constantly and simultaneously available. Schneider covered some of the areas by foot, some by bus or subway, often following public transportation line patterns. The piece was in black and white, of which Schneider said: "Black and white videotape works best in dramatic situations. My piece is an information collage. If color video were available cheaply, I would probably use it, but I don't think it's really critical to my work." Schneider's piece, with some modifications, is at the Kitchen this week.

Andy Mann's piece used 16 black-and-white monitors in a 4 x 4 matrix to show—separately—a street and a water piece, both untitled. Each was played on four simultaneously operating decks. The water piece used images of variously textured water surfaces. The street piece used primarily automobile and pedestrian traffic images, punctuated only by a sequence of a black derelict. Each of the four tapes was edited so that the images constantly shifted from monitor group to group in constantly changing relationships. "The pieces were created for this show from some ideas I've had for a while . . . My immediate plans include anything that there's bread in. I just can't go on working for nothing any longer."

What Mann said reflected a basic concern of a lot of the video artists at the conference: the fact that there's still no big apple—no real market—for video works *per se*. The conference itself also reflected the fact that what market there is is very much dominated by one point of view of what constitutes video art.

Joyce Nereaux, who handles video for the Castelli Gallery, said, "I can't say what kind of work we're interested in, although there's definitely a point of view to the kind of tapes we show. I can perhaps put it better in terms of the kind of video we're least interested in. This would include tapes which involve manipulation of the technology of the medium; tapes that are communication oriented; and tapes by people who come from other art forms. Of course, that's not absolute. We are open to some extent."

We're out of space, so we'll close with artist and video theoretician **Frank Gilette**, who opened the conference with a lecture/discussion. He said, "Art must again be concerned with what is essential, central and vital to the culture. Culture is no longer dominated by painted images. We have an ideational and aesthetic crisis in the midst of an advanced technology. Art has a central function in the information matrix created by all the TV sets in existence."

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